

# Vegetarian Nutrition

The best evidence indicates that a well balanced non-animal diet is the healthiest there is – for children as well as for adults. But the promotion of old-fashioned ideas, combined with the mind-bending power of the meat industry, still causes some worries. Here we provide a simple guide to some non-animal sources of the main nutrients.

**Vitamin A** – Carrots, green leafy vegetables, peppers, margarine, dried apricots.  
Essential for bone growth, immune system and preventing infections.

**Vitamin B** – Yeast extract (eg. Marmite), nuts, wholemeal bread, rice, mushrooms, bananas, sunflower and sesame seeds.  
Needed for the health and maintenance of the body's nervous system.

**Vitamin B12** – This vitamin is available in many fortified products (certain soya milks, breakfast cereals, yeast extract, margarine, soya mince and other convenience foods).  
Needed for cell division and blood formation.

**Vitamin C** – Oranges and other citrus fruits, blackcurrants, broccoli, spinach, cabbage, potatoes.  
Essential for growth and repair of tissues in all parts of the body.

**Vitamin D** – Most people obtain all the vitamin D they need from sunlight on their skin. Certain foods are fortified with it as well, like vegetable margarine.  
Regulates the formation of bone and the absorption of calcium and phosphorus from the intestine.

**Vitamin E** – Vegetable oils, wheatgerm, avocados, hazelnuts, almonds.  
Protects against cell damage, plays a role in immune function and DNA repair.

**Iodine** – Green leafy vegetables, seaweeds and kelp.  
Essential for development.

**Magnesium** – Wholegrains, green leafy vegetables, nuts, soya beans, yeast extract.  
Needed for healthy muscle function.

**Potassium** – Dried fruit, bananas, potatoes, nuts and pulses, wholegrains, wheatgerm, yeast extract.  
Needed for nerve function, muscle control and blood pressure.

**Selenium** – Wholegrains, beans and pulses, nuts.  
Essential for good health and plays a role in the immune system.

**Zinc** – Lentils, sesame and pumpkin seeds, brown rice and other wholegrains, green vegetables.  
Supports a healthy immune system, needed for healing wounds, helps maintain sense of taste and smell and is needed for DNA synthesis. Also supports normal growth and development during pregnancy, childhood and adolescence.

**Iron** – Baked breads, dried fruit, wholegrains (including bread), molasses, pulses, spinach, cabbage and nuts.  
Needed for healthy red blood cells to transport oxygen to different parts of the body.

**Calcium** – Some soya milks, nuts, seeds, green leafy vegetables, tofu and dried fruit.  
Needed for strong, healthy bones and teeth and for the working of muscles.

**Protein** – Tofu and rice, beans/pulses (peas, lentils) and wholegrains (eg. beans on toast), tahini and pulses (eg. houmous), soya milk and cereals, beansprouts and wholegrains. Protein needs are automatically met by a balanced, varied diet.  
Necessary for maintaining tissue, sustaining growth and protecting against infection.

**Fibre** – Wholegrains, nuts, beans and pulses, wheatgerm, oats, many fruits and vegetables.  
Essential for the digestive system to work properly. Clears away toxins and helps to prevent diseases.

**Essential Fatty Acids** – Vegetable oils (especially soya, corn, sunflower), avocados, margarine (animal-free), nuts, linseed (flax).  
A little fat (essential fats) is needed to repair tissue, manufacture hormones and carry some vitamins.

